



COUNTY OF SISKIYOU

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TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Randy Chafin, Interim Planning Director

DATE: May 17, 2017

SUBJECT: Item for Discussion:
Agritourism Zoning Conceptual Discussion

WHITE PAPER - AGRITOURISM ZONING CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of this white paper is to initiate a discussion among the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors about the concept of agritourism and the possibility of revising the Siskiyou County Zoning Ordinance in a manner that would accommodate, and possibly encourage, such uses and activities. Planning staff has developed this white paper in cooperation with staff from the Siskiyou County Economic Development Council. In addition, staff contacted planners in other rural California counties to gain insight on how agritourism is handled elsewhere.

This white paper provides some basic information about agritourism and attempts to identify potential benefits and drawbacks of allowing agritourism through an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. Planning staff requests feedback and guidance from the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors before beginning the process of developing revised zoning text.

Increasingly, the County has been asked to identify the zoning districts and locations that would permit what is, for the purpose of this white paper, referred to as agritourism. Also, the County is aware that agritourism, in various forms and intensities, is already taking place in certain agriculturally zoned areas of the County. Currently, the County Zoning Ordinance does not specifically recognize nor allow agritourism in the agricultural districts.

What is agritourism?

Agritourism, in its simplest definition, is when people not associated with a farm or ranch are invited to the farm or ranch to purchase products or engage in agricultural activities. Visitation can be as quick as purchasing an item and leaving (e.g., a produce stand, farmer's market, or tasting room) or can involve extended stays (e.g., rodeo, festival, retreat, social gathering, or dude ranch).

The Agricultural Issues Center at the UC Davis Cooperative Extension offers the following description of agritourism:

Agritourism is a business conducted by a farmer or rancher for the enjoyment or education of the public, to promote the products of the farm and generate additional farm income. It provides rural experiences to urban residents and economic alternatives to farmers and ranchers. Agritourism enterprises include such activities as farm tours, roadside stands, bed and breakfast businesses, and cattle drives.

Agritourism brings diversification opportunities to farms and ranches that can help buffer fluctuating markets. It can increase farm revenue and increase community economic activity. It can provide economically feasible ways to care for natural habitats, natural scenic areas, natural resources, and special places. Agritourism can also turn urban residents into strong allies of farms and ranches.

Agritourism brings diversity to agricultural operations, supplements income in low-revenue seasons, provides income that can help save the family farm or ranch, and promotes agricultural products.

The following definition of agritourism is contained in the Yolo County Zoning Ordinance:

An income-generating activity conducted on a working farm or ranch, or other agricultural operation or agricultural facility, for the enjoyment and education of visitors, guests, or clients. Agricultural tourism refers to the act of visiting a working farm or ranch, or any agricultural or horticultural operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or ranch or agricultural operation that also adds to the economic viability of the agricultural operation. Agritourism includes activities and uses that are appurtenant to the agricultural operations, that benefit from location in a quiet, sparsely populated, agricultural or natural environment, and that do not include commercial or retail uses and activities that are not directly related to agriculture such as sales of goods and services typically found in urban areas. Agricultural tourism uses include, but are not limited to, wine, beer, and olive tasting; sale of local agricultural products; lodging (bed and breakfast and farm stays); and event centers that accommodate weddings, music, and limited dining.

What sections of the Siskiyou County Zoning Ordinance currently could permit agritourism?

Currently, the Siskiyou County Zoning Ordinance makes no specific provisions for agritourism uses and activities. However, there are provisions that, through a use permit application, could be interpreted by the Planning Commission to allow the approval of certain uses and activities. However, as with all discretionary approvals, the path forward for a proposed agritourism use is presently uncertain.

In the AG-1 (Prime Agricultural) zone, the AG-2 (General, Non-prime Agricultural) zone, and the R-R (Rural Residential Agricultural) zone there are no permitted uses that would allow agritourism activities or uses, including *Accessory uses incidental to agricultural*. However, *Article 15 – General Provisions, Conditions, and Exceptions* identifies several uses and activities that may bear some similarity to agritourism. Those occur in *Section 10-6.1502*, as follows:

(c) Establishments or enterprises involving large assemblages of people or automobiles, as follows:

- (4) Recreational facilities privately operated,
- (5) Resorts, and
- (6) Public celebrations

Article 15 allows the Planning Commission to approve uses of the type listed above subject to the filing and approval of a use permit. Granting of a use permit is a discretionary action, which means that in order for the proposed uses and activities to be approved, the Planning Commission must find that the proposed uses and activities are compatible with the purpose of the AG-1 or AG-2 zoning district and will not result in unmitigated environmental impacts. Use permit applications are subject to environmental review under CEQA and a noticed public hearing.

Some issues to consider

The purpose of preparing this conceptual outline and vetting it with both the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors before proceeding with actual zoning text is so that both entities are in accord on what the revised ordinance will accomplish. Keep in mind that while we currently are aware of a limited number of instances of existing and proposed agritourism uses, the revised Zoning Ordinance text should provide a sufficiently large “umbrella” under which a wide variety of other proposals may come forward for approval in other parts of the county. In fact, the language added to the Zoning Ordinance could serve to attract agritourism uses. Some initial thoughts for consideration:

- Siskiyou County contains an abundance of productive growing and grazing land
- Siskiyou County is blessed with varied natural landscapes that are conducive to outdoor gatherings and events
- Nationally, there is a trend toward bringing tourists into agricultural operations for educational and tourism purposes
- How should agritourism be defined in Siskiyou County?
- What are the benefits of agritourism to growers and ranchers?
- What are the benefits of agritourism to the County tax base?
- What are the benefits of agritourism to residents and visitors?

- Here are some of the potential concerns to be addressed:
 - Compatibility with agricultural operations and residential use of adjacent and nearby properties regarding traffic, noise, nighttime lighting, use of pesticides;
 - Sufficiency of roadways;
 - Sufficiency of water and wastewater systems
- Need for limits (size of gatherings, times per year, hours per day, etc.) on agritourism to ensure that the primacy of the underlying agricultural production is not lost
- Possible imposition of conditions of approval to ensure long-term and ongoing compatibility and compliance
- Under what circumstances should agritourism be allowed as a permitted use and under what circumstances should it be conditionally permitted (i.e., requires a use permit)?
- Under what circumstances should agritourism proposals be administratively approved by staff vs. discretionarily approved by the Planning Commission?
- Could allowing agritourism inhibit the ongoing agricultural productivity of the land on which agritourism uses occur?
- Could allowing agritourism inhibit the ongoing agricultural productivity of the land adjacent to land on which agritourism uses occur?
- Could allowing agritourism create conflicts with the use and enjoyment of adjacent and nearby non-agricultural parcels?
- In which zoning districts should agritourism uses and activities be allowed?
 - Prime Agriculture (AG-1)
 - General, Non-prime Agriculture (AG-2)
 - Rural Residential Agriculture (R-R)
- Given the significance of the proposed zoning amendment, the critical importance of agriculture to Siskiyou County, and the potential widespread public interest, should a citizen's advisory committee be formed to provide additional input into this concept before it is "fleshed out" in the form of a zoning text amendment?

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